GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:1111
ANSWERED ON:30.07.2001
RISE IN ILLEGAL TRADE OF WILDLIFE
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Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether attention of the Government has been drawn to the news-item captioned ` Trade in animal skins rising in capital` as reported in the `Times of India` dated May 28, 2001:

(b) if so, the details and facts thereof:

(c) whether there has been steep rise in this trade since 1994-95 to till date;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) the steps taken by the Government to check the illegal trade?

Answer

MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI T.R. BAALU)

(a) &(b) The news item captioned `Trade in animal skins rising in capital` published in the `Times of India` on 28.5.2001 mentions that the National Capital is being used by the smugglers for illegal transactions and deals of wildlife and its derivatives .The reportstates that due to constant vigil along Indo- Nepal border the smugglers have started operating from cities such as Delhi. It has also mentioned that there is an increase in leopard poaching as a substitute for tiger, which is getting rare.

The contention of the news item is confirmed by the investigations made by enforcement agencies. Delhi is a preferred transit point for smuggled wildlife goods because of better chances of deals with foreign buyers going unnoticed.

(c) &(d) There has been an increase in the number of seizures made during recent years. Spurt in the number of seizures cannot be attributed to the increase in poaching alone. Involvement of specialized enforcement agencies like Central Bureau of Investigation, Customs Department, Directorate of Revenue Intelligence, Special Task Force of the Uttar Pradesh Govt. has also contributed to the number of seizure cases.

(e) The steps taken by the Government to check the illegal trade are:

(1) Steps taken at the State level:

(i) Legal protection has been provided to wild animals against hunting and commercial exploitation under the provisions of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.

(ii) State level and District level coordination committees have been set up in several States to prevent poaching and illegal trade in wildlife.

(iii) The Chief Wildlife Wardens of all the four Southern States hold periodical meetings for border area protection and to deal with the problems of poaching and illegal trade.

(iv) Regular Task Force consisting of Police and Forests Officials has been set up to deal with poachers and smugglers.

(v) Anti poaching camps has been established at sensitive places in Southern Indian States.

(vi) The State of Karnataka have set up a Special Forest Cell in the police department consisting 300 personals and headed by an Inspector General of Police to deal with forest offences.

(vii) The Forest protection staff has been provided immunity against arrest in case they open fire on the poachers and smugglers.

(2) Steps taken at National level

i. Government of India has set up Regional and Sub-regional Offices for wildlife preservation in major export and trade centres of the country to prevent smuggling of wild animals and their products.
ii. Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has been empowered under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 to apprehend and prosecute wildlife offenders. Anti poaching efforts are being coordinated with INTERPOL.
iii. Financial and technical help is being extended to the States under various Centrally Sponsored Schemes, viz. Project Tiger, Project Elephant, Development of National Parks and Sanctuaries and Eco-development around Protected Areas for enhancing the capacity and infrastructure of the States for providing effective protection to wild animals. Financial assistance is, in particular, being provided for raising `Strike Forces` and providing arms to the protection staff for combating the organised poachers. Assistance is also provided for giving rewards to the informers for eliciting information about poachers and smugglers.
iv. A Special Coordination and Enforcement Committee has been set up under the chairmanship of Secretary, Environment & Forests, Government of India, for control of poaching and illegal trade in wildlife.
v. Export of wild animals and their derivatives is prohibited under EXIM policy.
vi. A National Conference of Forests and Environment Ministers of State Government was held on 29th and 30th January, 2001. It was resolved to organise existing protection staff into viable formations for effective control of poaching and to create enforcement infrastructure both within and out side protected areas.
vii. Ministry of Home Affairs has written to all the State Governments to lend a helping hand to the field formations to curb poaching and illegal trade in wildlife.

(3) Steps taken at International level.

i. Government of India seeks international co-operation under the provisions of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES) for control of illegal trade in wildlife items.

ii. To control transboundary trade a protocol has been signed with Peoples` Republic of China and an MOU has been signed with His Majesty`s Government of Nepal.

iii. A Global Tiger Forum of Tiger Range Countries has been created for addressing international issues related to Tiger Conservation.